DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 217 704 FL 012 967

AUTHOR Walz, Joel C.
TITLE Error Correction Techniques for the Foreign Language Classroom. Language in Education: Theory and Practice, No. 50.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-87281-307-X
PUB DATE May 82
CONTRACT 400-77-0049
NOTE 58p.
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Applied Linguistics, P.O. Box 4866, Hampden Station, Baltimore, MD 21211 ($5.75).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; English (Second Language); Error Patterns; French; German; Higher Education; Language Patterns; *Oral Language; Secondary Education; *Second Language Instruction; Spanish; Speech Communication; Teaching Methods; *Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS *Error Correction (Language)

ABSTRACT

A review of literature on error correction shows a lack of agreement on the benefits of error correction in second language learning and confusion on which errors to correct and the approach to take to correction of both oral and written language. This monograph deals with these problems and provides examples of techniques in English, French, German, and Spanish. The chapter on selection of errors to correct presents 15 areas research has suggested and proposes a system for choosing errors for correction based on the criteria of comprehensibility, frequency, pedagogical focus, and individual student concerns. With regard to techniques for correcting oral work, there is general agreement that the approach should be positive. Within this perspective, a number of techniques are suggested for oral correction under the headings of self-correction, peer-correction and teacher-correction. The same categories are used to discuss techniques for correcting compositions and other written work. Appendices include a checklist of frequent errors made by ESL students, a list of points to aid essay-writers, and two composition check-lists. A list of references completes the volume. (AMH)

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LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION:
Theory and Practice

50

Joel C. Walz

Error Correction Techniques for the Foreign Language Classroom

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FL012967

Published by
CAL Center for Applied Linguistics

Prepared by
ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics

This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education under contract no. 400-77-0049. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or ED.

Language in Education: Theory and Practice
Series ISBN: 87281-092-5

ISBN: 87281-307-X

May 1982
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By the Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect Street NW
Washington DC 20007

Printed in the U.S.A.

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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The material in this publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either ACTFL or NIE. This publication is not printed at the expense of the Federal Government.

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Sophia Behrens, Editor

CONTENTS

Acknowledgment		vii
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Errors and Error Evaluation	1
	Previous Research	3
	Ongoing Research	4
	Goals of This Monograph	5
2.	WHICH ERRORS TO CORRECT	6
	Previous Research	6
	Synthesis	10
	Examples of Selectivity in Error Correction	12
3.	TECHNIQUES OF ERROR CORRECTION: ORAL WORK	15
	General Considerations	15
	Who Corrects?	17
	Techniques	18
4.	TECHNIQUES OF ERROR CORRECTION: WRITTEN WORK	27
	General Considerations	27
	Techniques	28
5.	CONCLUSION	33
APPENDICES		35
REFERENCES		43

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Thomas Cooper, associate professor of German and language education, and Hildebrando Ruiz, assistant professor of Spanish, of the University of Georgia, for providing examples in their languages of specialization. I would also like to thank Carmen Rogers, Ed.D. candidate in foreign language education at the University, for her insights into the "silent way."

The writing of this monograph was made possible in part by a summer research grant from the department of Romance languages, University of Georgia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Errors and Error Evaluation

The last twenty years have seen a dramatic change in attitude on the part of researchers and teachers toward errors that learners make in the foreign language classroom. The careful, often tedious, drills of the audiolingual method, which attempted to make errors all but impossible, have given way to a cognitive approach involving more communicative activities, an approach in which errors are seen as a necessary and perhaps beneficial strategy of learning (Allwright 1975, Gorbet 1974, Hendrickson 1978, Joiner 1975, Mitchell 1978). Learning a new language requires a trial and error approach, and errors are evidence that the learner is testing hypotheses of underlying rules, categories, and systems (Corder 1973).

Much of the current thinking on second language acquisition has concentrated on its similarities to first language acquisition. Children make many errors during the learning period, and these errors often fit into logical patterns just as do those of adult learners of a second language. The reaction these errors evoke, however, destroys the parallel. Children are rewarded if their use of the language is in any way successful, and they are corrected only if communication breaks down. Students in a foreign language class are frequently encouraged to produce grammatically correct sentences rather than to communicate a meaningful message. If there are similarities between first and second language acquisition, then more thought will have to be given to the importance and method of correcting errors (Hanzeli 1975, Holley and King 1971).

Adult learners should be able to provide information on the value of correcting oral errors. However, studies in this area are contradictory. Cathcart and Olsen (1976) and Courchêne (1980b) found that students felt the need to be corrected and preferred being corrected all the time. On the other hand, Walker (1973) found that students believe frequent correction destroys their confidence and that communicating is

more important than error-free speech. Several other studies have shown what teachers actually do in a classroom situation, given this lack of student consensus. Cathcart and Olsen (1976), Courchêne (1980a), Fanselow (1977), and Lucas (1976) all observed that the most frequent correction technique was simply to tell the students the correct answer, a method that Lucas calls a "reflex action." Fanselow points out that giving the student the answer does not establish a pattern for long-term memory. Lucas agrees, stating that correcting an error requires cognitive operations on the part of the student that are as complex as the processes that caused the error. Providing the correct answer does not guarantee that these operations will take place. Holley and King (1971) discovered that beginning teachers corrected almost all errors and even filled in student pauses. The teachers had monopolized class time with discourse, explanations, and the native language rather than using the target language.

The lack of agreement on the benefits of correction leads to a second area of confusion: which errors to correct. Since current methods of teaching require more risk taking by students, many researchers have pleaded for more selective error correction (Burt and Kiparsky 1974, Chastain 1971, Grittner 1977, Hendrickson 1976). Burt feels that it is easy to destroy a student's confidence with too many interruptions (1975). Overcorrection cuts off students' sentences, causes them to lose their train of thought, and prevents them from relating to a new sentence (Burt and Kiparsky 1972). Corrections of all student errors will also reduce their desire to say anything at all.

In a seeming contradiction with this plea for selective correction, several researchers have complained that teachers do not correct errors consistently (Allwright 1975, Chaudron 1977, Cohen and Robbins 1976, Long 1977). Often the correction is too vague to be of help. In fact, overcoming inconsistency does not exclude selectivity, but involves establishing categories of errors and then correcting only the serious ones. This will be discussed in Chapter 2 with reference to previous research. However, teachers should not forget to be flexible as well as consistent. They must take into account the needs and abilities of individual students as well as the type of error made. One might correct an error if it is made by a gifted student but not by a slow learner, or when made by a student interested in continuing in the language but not by a student only completing a requirement.

The correction of written errors has also received attention. Teachers may establish higher standards for correcting

written errors because students have more time to prepare written work. For example, they may consult grammar books, dictionaries, and even the teacher before writing a final draft. The teacher also has more time to evaluate and analyze written errors. The affective variables of written errors are also different from those of oral errors. The former are corrected in private, so students are not embarrassed in front of their friends. Shaughnessy (1977) has developed a system for analyzing and eliminating errors made by native speakers of English who have writing deficiencies, and these principles can be applied to other languages.

However, not all scholars agree with this interpretation; many propose correcting both written and oral errors selectively (see pp. 27-28). A study of previous research can prove helpful in deciding which approach to take.

Previous Research

The most important work to consider is the article by Hendrickson (1978), which gives an overview of the theoretical research carried out to that point. He feels that study in this area is insufficient and inconclusive, but that some important ideas can be drawn from it. Synthesizing published research, he attempts to answer five questions: should errors be corrected, and, if so, which ones, when, how, and by whom? He finds that correcting errors does improve the proficiency of second language learners, if they are errors that inhibit communication, stigmatize the learner, and appear frequently. There is no consensus as to when errors should be corrected, but the manner in which it is done should be supportive rather than critical. Many ways of correcting have been suggested, but none has been shown superior to any other. Finally, teachers should not dominate this aspect of classwork.

Some evidence contradicts Hendrickson's first conclusion by affirming that error correction does not improve student production (Krashen 1978). This hypothesis may be true of both oral and written errors. In one experiment, self-correction by students did not improve their ability to write (Cohen and Robbins 1976, Robbins 1977). Hendrickson (1976) himself found that correcting only communicative errors in one group and all errors in another did not make a difference in students' writing ability. On the other hand, Gaudiani (1981) reports significant progress using an in-class editing approach. The contrast with Hendrickson's results may be due to direct interaction between the teacher and students or a greater amount of

time spent on writing. In the case of oral errors, Berwald (1979) believes that correction does help, but only on the basis of his experience with a small group of students for five hours or more per day. Even faced with these discouraging results, teachers should not abandon the accepted practice of correcting errors. Students themselves expect to be corrected, and they would be upset if they were not given feedback. It is important to decide which errors to correct and how this correction can be done most effectively.

Ongoing Research

Perhaps the most productive research being carried out currently is in the area of native speaker reaction to learner errors. This research focuses on communication rather than grammatical accuracy and on the types of errors that block communication and irritate native speakers. Two studies have shown that native speakers are able to rank errors consistently (James 1977, Mattran 1977). Palmer (1981) has attempted to devise a mathematical formula to express the gravity of an error, but it is based on frequency of occurrence rather than on the reaction it causes. Studies of comprehensibility of errors (cited with the target language) were done by Burt 1975 (English); Galloway 1980 (Spanish); Guntermann 1978 (Spanish); and Olsson 1972, 1973 (English). Several other studies sought to discover which errors are "acceptable" and "unacceptable." These can be ambiguous terms, because linguists commonly use the same term to refer to grammaticality. "Irritability" is a more precise term. Ensz 1976 (French); Politzer 1978 (German); and Wigdorsky-Vogelsang 1978 (English) have all studied errors that native speakers find objectionable. Studies that combine comprehensibility and irritability have been done by Chastain 1980a, 1981 (Spanish); Johansson 1978 (English); and Piazza 1980 (French).

Unfortunately, the research provides numerous contradictions (Walz 1980). Burt found word order to be the most serious hindrance to communication; however, Olsson, Johansson, and Chastain found that lexicon most impaired comprehensibility. Wigdorsky-Vogelsang believes that pronunciation is more important than semantics or syntax. On the other hand, Guntermann found the number of errors in a sentence is more important than the error type. In the case of acceptability, Ensz found grammatical errors more irritating than lexicon, while Johansson and Politzer found the opposite. One need not contrast different studies and different languages to find contradictions. Chastain (1981) reports that his native

speaker subjects found vocabulary errors to be the most irritating type in noun phrases, yet the errors most frequently overlooked were precisely those. Clearly, much more work is necessary in this area. More precise information is needed about such variables as target language, native language, judges, mode of communication, and the contact situation.

Goals of This Monograph

The research done on error correction demonstrates that it is an important topic. Over the years, numerous suggestions for classroom teachers have appeared that are much too diverse to be of practical use. I will attempt to compile these ideas, and to add to them whenever possible, so that teachers will have a source of techniques for correcting errors. Chapter 3 will deal with oral errors and Chapter 4 with written errors. The possibilities presented in these chapters are far too numerous for individual teachers to use; they must choose the ones most appropriate to their specific teaching situation.

Before considering error correction techniques, it is necessary to decide which errors to correct. This problem will be discussed in the following chapter.

2. WHICH ERRORS TO CORRECT

Any analysis of the practical aspects of correcting student errors must begin with the decision about which types of errors should be corrected. Oral errors present the greatest difficulty for the reasons stated in the previous section. After discovering that a group of students wanted all errors corrected, Cathcart and Olsen (1976) asked a teacher to attempt to do this. The students were unable to think clearly or produce complete sentences. Chastain (1971) points out that it is discourteous to interrupt people when they are speaking. He states that overcorrection prevents students from concentrating on the message, and that it destroys the pleasure of learning a foreign language. Valette (1973) supports the idea that correcting too many errors not only destroys motivation but encourages the production of simplistic sentences rather than complex, but inaccurate ones. Burt and Kiparsky (1974) point out that this may also lead to spending a lot of time on superficial errors rather than more serious ones. However, at least two extensive studies show that many teachers do, in fact, try to correct everything (Cathcart and Olsen 1976, Holley and King 1971).

Previous Research

Because it seems unwise and impractical to correct every mistake, teachers must be selective. This selectivity should not be hit or miss, given the numerous complaints about inconsistent correction mentioned earlier.

Allwright (1975) has proposed a categorization of errors into four broad areas for purposes of analysis. Most suggestions for error hierarchy include the ideas expressed in this system.

- Linguistic description. The most basic concepts for the teacher to consider are the mode of expression (written or oral) and the intended meaning.

- Importance. The considerations that may make an error important are: the pedagogical focus at the time it is made, the frequency with which it occurs, the number of learners affected, and its relationship to successful communication.

- Source. Errors can be caused by interlingual and intralingual (i.e., L_1 and L_2) interference, strategies of second language learning, and inappropriate teaching methods.

- Ease of correction. Practical considerations include the teacher's competence, resources, and available time.

Johansson (1973) describes a traditional system in order to contrast it with one he considers more appropriate. In Sweden, teachers use six criteria for grading written compositions:

- Generality: infringement of general rules is more serious than an isolated lexical item.

- Frequency: errors with common words are more serious.

- Comprehensibility: is the meaning lost?

- Curriculum: has the feature been taught?

- Competence/performance: is the error just a slip of the pen?

- Speech and writing relationship: would a written error cause an error in the oral form?

Johansson disagrees with this system because it emphasizes conformity to rules rather than basic communication, which is the primary goal of language use. He suggests concentrating on two areas: comprehensibility and irritation. An error that impedes the understanding of a message or that causes a negative reaction on the part of the listener is more serious than those that do not have such an effect. After this analysis has been made, he suggests refining it by evaluating for frequency of occurrence and generality. Practically all researchers have adopted this system for working on native speaker reactions to the oral and written errors of second language learners. Johansson warns, however, that conformity to rules cannot be totally ignored, because students may have difficulty adjusting to more stringent requirements at the advanced levels.

Another widely used taxonomy for learner errors is that developed by Burt and Kiparsky. They use the terms *global* and *local* errors. Global errors are those that block communication; local errors are those that appear in isolated sentence elements (inflections, articles, auxiliaries, etc.). They stress overall sentence organization, and the relationship among clauses in particular, as potential areas for global mistakes. Those to look for are

- using the correct connector;
- maintaining the distinction between coordinate and relative clauses;
- keeping a parallel structure in reduced coordinate clauses; and
- tense continuity (Burt and Kiparsky 1974).

Other problem areas include

- wrong word order;
- missing word or misplaced connector;
- missing cues to signal exceptions to syntactic rules; and
- overgeneralization of rules to include exceptions (Burt 1975).

Burt believes that an utterance becomes much more comprehensible when the teacher corrects one global error rather than several local ones. Of course, this type of decision would permit selectivity in correction.

Several other simple systems for evaluating errors have been proposed. Holley and King (1971) used two criteria for oral correction to train graduate teaching assistants: the error had to be common to the class and it had to reflect the lesson being taught. Hendrickson (1979) suggests a hierarchy for oral errors based on the proficiency of the student:

- Elementary level: correct only errors that impede communication.
- Intermediate level: correct errors that occur frequently.

- Advanced level: correct errors that have a stigmatizing effect upon the student.

Hendrickson (1980) also proposes four considerations that could be applied to all error correction:

- Student goals: what use will the language be put to eventually?
- Student proficiency: is self-correction possible?
- Teacher awareness of error types (i.e., comprehensibility and irritation).
- Student attitudes: less self-confident students need more feedback.

Cohen (1975), however, has suggested the most comprehensive system for selecting errors to correct. He lists four areas for analysis:

- Basic information about the error: what was said and what was meant.
- Importance of the correction. Most important errors are those
  . of intelligibility;
  . of high frequency;
  . of high generality of rules;
  . that stigmatize or irritate;
  . that affect a large number of students; and
  . that are relevant to the pedagogical focus.
- Ease of correction (from Allwright, above).
- Characteristics of the student. These would include
  . individual differences (native language, personality, aptitude);
  . past history (academic record, previous errors); and
  . current state (motivation, anxiety, fatigue).

Cohen readily admits, however, that the teacher has too many things to think about while conducting oral lessons to make the split-second decisions required by this elaborate system.

Synthesis

It is obvious that a teacher cannot evaluate during class the 12 to 15 areas presented above that researchers have suggested. Even grading compositions would take an inordinate amount of time if each error had to be evaluated according to all the criteria enumerated in the section above. Knop (1980) recommends that student teachers use five of Cohen's criteria for judging the importance of errors. Even that number, however, seems excessive. I believe that a synthesis of previous research can provide a manageable system.

Irritating or stigmatizing errors appear to be difficult to evaluate. Even teachers who are conducting classes in their native language would have to make subjective judgments. Student attempts to formulate unknown words by adding /o/ to an English word for a French verb (*Je vais studyer*) or /o/ for a Spanish noun (*el booko*) would be highly irritating for an American teacher but only incomprehensible to a native speaker of the target language. Until research is able to show which errors evoke negative reactions from significant numbers of native speakers of the most commonly taught languages, teachers will have to continue to correct the errors that they personally do not like.

The number of students affected by an error (see Allwright, Cohen, above) can also vary. In classes in which students have the same native language, interference errors would be consistent. In other classes, however, trying to determine how many students would make a given error can be an imposing task. Also, inexperienced teachers, who obviously have more problems than experienced ones, would have a particularly difficult time evaluating the number of students affected by a given error.

Another problem involves the generality of the broken rule (Johansson, Cohen, above). If the error is an isolated item, it is supposedly not as important as one that violates a general rule. However, as pointed out earlier, several studies have shown that errors of lexicon affect comprehensibility more than those of syntax. Thus, one finds conflicting theories within the suggested systems of evaluation.

The simplified system proposed here for deciding which errors to correct includes the following four criteria:

Comprehensibility. Above all, teachers should correct errors that cause a misunderstanding or lack of comprehension.

Because the main purpose of using a language is to communicate ideas, correcting for comprehensible forms is a reasonable goal. Teachers must be constantly on the lookout for this type of error, particularly those who are experienced, because they have learned to understand students' interlanguage much better than a monolingual speaker of the target language. This is especially true if the teacher shares the native language of the students.

Frequency. This can mean errors that are made by an entire class or by individual students. If the teacher succeeds in eradicating a frequent error, then a greater percentage of accurate language use will result. A frequent error is usually made on a common point of grammar, so the carryover value of learning the correct form is greater than with an isolated mistake. Beginning teachers will have greater difficulty in knowing which errors are the most frequent. Some writers have suggested keeping tally sheets for written and oral errors (Hendrickson 1979, Higgs 1979, Omaggio 1981). Clearly, experience will provide the greatest help.

Pedagogical focus. Errors in forms that students have recently learned in class should be corrected. Researchers have not paid enough attention to the potential for confusion that error correction, or the lack of it, can cause. Allwright (1975) mentions that students may not understand the selectivity of a teacher who chooses not to correct a certain mistake. If a class spends time studying a particular grammar feature and then an error occurs and goes uncorrected, all the students who hear it will begin to question their own understanding of the structure. This tendency is particularly relevant in the traditional classroom where students are motivated by and concerned about tests and grades.

Individual student concerns. All good teachers get to know their students and to learn who are the most sensitive to correction. More capable students can profit from corrections of minor points. Students who take a sequence of courses will need a firmer grasp of linguistic features than a student who is enrolled in a terminal course. Adults probably profit from correction of grammatical features more than children. Some students want to be corrected all the time, while others are more easily inhibited.

While not touching upon all concerns of importance, these four criteria represent an optimum number of considerations that a teacher can keep in mind while conducting oral lessons. Any more would detract from the pace of the class, and any fewer would lead to a superficial evaluation of errors.

Teachers can analyze and correct written errors at a more leisurely pace, but with an imposing number of compositions to grade, most teachers will be limited to the same four criteria. With the possible exception of comprehensibility, all can become nearly automatic responses on the teacher's part. Stopping a class in order to ponder the variables of an error would waste more time than correcting it. Teachers can even evaluate comprehensibility quickly with practice. Many times they may just not be able to understand the students' comments. The following section will provide practice in choosing errors to correct. Examples will be given in English, French, German, and Spanish.

Examples of Selectivity in Error Correction

The following examples are possible spoken replies that students might make to personalized questions asked by the teacher. (In a pattern drill, more corrections would be appropriate.) The discussion after each sentence shows how the simplified system just described can be used in a teaching situation.

English

*I am coming from France to study the English.

This sentence contains two errors that native speakers of French frequently make in English. The use of the present progressive can impede the message because the listener expects an action that is in progress. Thus, comprehensibility and frequency are two criteria for correction. The misuse of the definite article is normally less serious. Had the mistake been "study the mathematics," no confusion would result. There is a possibility, however, that the listener would interpret this as "the English people," so a clarification is necessary.

*My friend have many ambition to see United States.

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*Sentences containing errors are preceded by an asterisk.

The first error, subject-verb agreement, may be caused by an incomplete knowledge of the verb or a failure to vocalize the final consonant in the noun. One might not have to correct if it is not important to know whether it is one friend or several in this context. However, this certainly is a frequent developmental error. The expression "many ambition" is comprehensible, but if the distinction between count and mass nouns was a recent pedagogical focus, then a correction is in order. The lack of an article with "United States" follows a general rule with countries, so the error is of minor importance.

French

*Je l'ai demandé si il a venir.

The use of a direct object with *demander* changes the meaning, but in context there will be no problem. However, the class might have been studying this structure. The lack of elision (*si il*) causes no problem, but the end clause is incomprehensible. The student could mean the past, present, or future, so the teacher should seek additional information.

*Il a devenu un professeur dans trois ans.

The first error, the incorrect auxiliary, does not impede communication, but it is a very frequent one and could be corrected. The use of an article with a profession is a frequent error but is less likely to be of pedagogical focus with *devenir* than with *être*, for example. It can safely be ignored. The wrong preposition causes a problem because *dans* would imply a future time. The listener would have to guess if the speaker means *est devenu . . . en* or *va devenir . . . dans*. Thus, despite pedagogical focus or frequency, the error needs to be clarified.

German

*Der großer Mann war also hier.

Morphological errors in case endings do not seem to bother native speakers of German as much as other kinds of errors. On the other hand, the confusion of the form *großer*, which is used with no article, with the correct form *große* is a very frequent error. Perhaps on the basis of recent emphasis in the

course, the teacher could decide whether or not to correct. The use of a false cognate (*also* for *auch*) is a more serious semantic mistake and could lead to a comprehension problem if not corrected.

*Voriges Jahr er arbeitete in Berlin und bekam sehr reich.

This sentence contains a syntactic error, but it does not cause a problem in communication. After an introductory adverbial element, the correct order should be *arbeitete er*. More serious is the use of the wrong verb for "to become." For a change of state, the correct verb is *wurde*. The one used above has only a transitive meaning. Since the analogy of "to get" and "to become" is apparent only to a speaker of English, the error hinders the understanding of the message. It should be corrected.

Spanish

*Te quiero venir a una clase de mía.

The initial syntactic error is a serious one from a communicative standpoint. It has to be corrected for the message to be understood. A possibility could be the pinpointing technique, *Quiero que . . .* to elicit the subjunctive. The introduction of *de*, through English interference, is less serious and probably would not cause a misunderstanding.

*Calculó que vive en la sábana.

This sentence contains two errors of word stress that cause different communication problems. If the meaning is obviously "I figure" (*Calculo*), then the error must be corrected. The listener understands "he figured." Of course, the context would determine how difficult the meaning is to grasp. The last word should be *sabana*. Although the semantic error might give pause, the listener could guess the meaning. Hence, it is less necessary to correct stress.

(N.B. For more analyses of error gravity, see Burt and Kiparsky [1972, 1974] and Walz [1981].)

3. TECHNIQUES OF ERROR CORRECTION: ORAL WORK

General Considerations

Some general remarks are necessary before examining specific techniques. Numerous scholars have recommended placing more emphasis on correction during drill than during communication activities (Cathcart and Olsen 1976; Chastain 1971, 1981; Knop 1980; Rivers 1975). Drill stresses linguistic patterns and accuracy, while communication is a time for experimentation and creating the desire to continue speaking the target language.

Several other researchers have stressed not interrupting the student too quickly. While studying elementary science students, Rowe (1974) found that if the teacher waited three to five seconds to intervene after asking a question (instead of the typical one second), student responses increased dramatically. Holley and King (1971) asked their graduate teachers to wait [illegible] to ten seconds after a student began to speak. With this change the students were able to correct their own errors [illegible] percent of the time. A characteristic of the outstanding teachers observed by Moskowitz (1976) is that they waited longer to correct errors. Other researchers have supported this idea (Joiner 1975, Mitchell 1978). Not interrupting is carried even farther in Gattegno's "silent way" technique, where the teacher never interrupts. Gattegno (1976) believes that silence is necessary because the students have work to do to learn a language, and the teacher would only interfere.

A third suggestion that one finds frequently in the literature is that the teacher should attempt to avoid errors whenever possible. This does not refer to the attempts made by the proponents of the audiolingual method to develop elaborate drills; it simply means to avoid confusion. McTear (1976) points out that errors may result simply because students do not know what procedure is being used in class. Stenson (1974) cites several areas (vocabulary, syntax, drills) where

a teacher's inadequate understanding of the students' level of ability could artificially create errors. Fanselow (1977) observed behavior on the part of 11 teachers that induced errors. Their actions included interrupting too quickly, asking for ambiguous word choices, giving inexplicit directions for drills, and using vague correction techniques that led to error repetition. Knop (1980) has identified three sources of unnecessary errors--confusion, tension, and boredom--and has provided numerous suggestions for correcting these problems. Herron (1981) recommends that when teachers do oral drills with students, they should make the directions clear, make the drills interesting, and require repetitions to reduce student errors.

One of the greatest subjects of controversy in error correction is whether or not to use the student's error in the correction technique. It has long been an axiom of foreign language teaching that incorrect forms should not be given to students because errors are as easy to learn as correct forms (Grew 1964, Mitchell 1978). However, the survey that Cathcart and Olsen made (1976) showed that ESL students liked having the error and the correct forms compared as a teaching technique. Others have suggested a pairing of correct and incorrect forms (Holley and King 1971), even to the extent of writing them on the board (Fanselow 1977). Corder (1973) is a firm believer in using "negative instances" or "what is not an example" (i.e., errors). He feels that these will help resolve learners' problems by getting to the source of the error. Because there is no research to support either side of the argument, one can only conclude that extreme care should be used when adapting learner errors to correction techniques. The teacher should contrast them with the correct forms and make it clear which ones are wrong.

The last general consideration is one that all researchers and teachers can agree on. Teachers should make corrections in a positive manner. Vigil and Oller (1976) found that predominantly negative feedback discourages student participation. Teachers should correct gently and with respect. This is especially true with oral work because it is almost always in front of others. Students respond much better to this approach than to criticism (Moskowitz 1976). The use of positive techniques and the avoidance of embarrassing students were some of my primary considerations when setting up the following hierarchy of persons who should correct errors.

In this monograph I have adopted as the most productive for language learning the following hierarchy of persons who correct errors: first, the student who made the error; second, other students in the class; and last, the teacher.

Students are capable of correcting their own errors (Gattegno 1976). Krashen and Pon (1975) found that an advanced language learner was able to correct 95 percent of her own errors. Robbins (1977) found that intermediate ESL students could locate 27 percent of their errors and then correct about half of those. Others quote the figure of a 50 percent possibility for self-correction (Holley and King 1971, White 1977). Thus, allowing students to correct their own mistakes could reduce teacher talk of this type by one-half and also reduce the intimidation factor introduced by excessive criticism. One can assume that students would acquire more feelings of self-sufficiency if allowed to pursue this course of action.

Peer correction is another way to involve students actively in the teaching of the class. Stevick (1980) warns that it can invite unfavorable comparison between students, but he goes on to point out that it is a more informative way of correcting errors because it comes from someone who has had the same experience (also Burt and Kiparsky 1972). It is also less threatening because no grade is involved. Obviously, the teacher has to be careful to avoid calling on the same student or small group all the time, because the others may be sensitive to favoritism. However, peer correction can have several advantages. First, it may motivate students who previously thought a foreign language was impossible to learn, because they see their classmates using it correctly. Second, peer correction involves a greater number of students in the running of the class. Third, the corrections tend to be at a level that others in the class can understand. And last, self- and peer correction increase the amount of time students talk in class and reduce the amount of time that the teacher must talk.

The teacher will also have to correct errors. Courchêne (1980) points out that current theories of language learning stress hypothesis formation on the part of the learner. To test these hypotheses of rule formation, the learner must have an "auto-corrective capacity." Therefore, the teacher should correct errors as a last resort.

In three studies involving classroom observations, teacher correction proved to be the most frequent technique (Cathcart and Olsen 1976, Fanselow 1977, Lucas 1976). Fanselow warns that simply giving the correct answer does not establish a pattern for long-term memory. Lucas states that giving the right answer may just be a reflex action triggered when the teacher hears an error. This is entirely possible, because Cathcart and Olsen report that providing the correct model is the most frequent technique in actual use, but only third on the list of teacher preferences. In other words, in that particular study, teachers gave the answer more than they realized.

Certainly the teacher will have to give a correct answer, if only to save time or avoid the confusion of multiple errors. Ramirez and Stromquist (1979) found that the overt correction of oral grammatical errors is positively associated with student growth. However, students may still not understand why their sentences are wrong, or perhaps will not even hear the correction.

*Techniques**

Self-correction

Although the students correct their own errors, the teacher does play a role by calling attention to the fact that a statement contains an inaccuracy.

Pinpointing. This is the term Cathcart and Olsen (1976) use to describe the teacher's localizing an error without giving it away. In their study, this was the technique that ESL teachers preferred. Knop (1980) suggests repeating the student's sentence up to the error. This can be a very effective technique for correcting student-generated sentences (versus a sentence from the textbook with a blank to be filled in). The last word before the error should have a slightly exaggerated vowel length and trailing intonation for the student to catch the idea that the fragment needs to be completed again.

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*All the examples given below are original. Readers may wish to consult the sources for additional examples.

S: Demain, je vais aller à le supermarché.
T: Je vais aller . . .
S: Je vais aller au supermarché.

S: Yo veo mi amigo.
T: Yo veo . . .
S: Yo veo a mi amigo.

Rephrasing question. Holley and King (1971) suggest rephrasing the question in order to reduce the number of words. This technique should be used when the student indicates a lack of understanding of the question but does not make a grammatical error.

T: Why did you decide to come to this country?
S: [hesitation]
T: Why are you here?
S: I come here to learn English.
T: I . . .
S: I came here to learn English.

Joiner (1975) suggests rephrasing not only to reduce the number of words but also to change an information question to a yes-no question. For example, "Where were you born?" could be changed to "Were you born in the United States?"

Cueing (Holley and King 1971). The teacher gives the grammatical variations of a key content word. This is possible when a student indicates difficulty forming a specific word.

T: ¿Conoce Ud. a mucha gente de Madrid?
S: No, no . . .
T: Conoce, conoces, conozco . . .
S: No conozco a mucha gente de Madrid.

T: What did you bring to class?
S: I . . .
T: Bring, brought . . .
S: I brought my books.

Generating simple sentences (Holley and King 1971). With this technique, the teacher provides several possible answers to the question just asked, thereby relaxing the constraints. Like rephrasing the question, this is a technique to use when the student shows a lack of understanding of an entire question.

T: Was lesen Sie gern?
S: [puzzled look]
T: Ich lese Kriegsromane gern. Ich lese Krimis auch gern. Ich lese die Zeitung gern.
S: Ich lese Krimis gern.

T: Qu'est-ce que vous faites samedi soir?
S: [no response]
T: Moi, je vais au cinéma, je regarde la télévision, je sors avec des amis.
S: Je regarde la télévision.

Explain key word (Joiner 1975). This can be done by writing a difficult word on the board or by acting it out. The former technique is particularly useful when the phoneme-grapheme relationship causes a problem.

T: D'où viens-tu?
S: [no response]
T: [writes] D'où [asks] Tu viens de . . .
S: Je viens du Canada.

Acting out a word is frequently possible, depending on its meaning. The meaning of verbs is generally the easiest to get across.

T: ¿Sabe Ud. conducir un coche?
S: Yo . . . sé . . .
T: [gestures: hands on an imaginary steering wheel]
S: Yo se conducir un coche.

If possible, gestures should be culturally authentic. To demonstrate the meaning of French *boire* or Spanish *beber*, for example, the teacher should have a clenched fist with a thumb pointing to the mouth rather than having the hand grasp an imaginary glass, as Americans do.

Questioning (Burt and Kpparsky 1972). If the student uses a word that the teacher does not understand, the teacher should ask a question about it. The student should reveal the meaning of the word without recourse to the native language and without making an obvious correction.

S: I am studying to be [incomprehensible word]
T: Why do you want to do that?
S: I like to help people.

T: How will you help them?
S: They can see better.
T: Yes, an *optometrist* does that.

This may be a roundabout way to correct, but it provides oral practice.

Repetition. Cohen (1975) advises teachers to ask a student to repeat the sentence containing the error. The technique is deliberately ambiguous, so the students do not feel they have been corrected. Fanselow (1977) takes exception to this because it is too vague, and the student may not realize that an error has been made or where it is. Perhaps if the teacher says the target language word for "Repeat" or "Again" with a questioning look, the message would be clearer. It is a technique to try with the better students in class who need a challenge.

"No." Shaking one's head from side to side is also criticized by Fanselow as being too vague. However, it can be used effectively in certain areas. If the class were concentrating on a particular point of grammar, especially an "either-or" choice, the students would understand. (For example, a wrong choice between *sit* and *set* in English, the imperfect and *passé composé* in French, *kennen*, *wissen*, and *können* in German, and *ser* and *estar* in Spanish could be corrected by shaking the head "no." Because the students realize they are choosing among two or three alternatives, the gesture would cause them to rethink the answer.) Like repetition, this method can also be used with more advanced students. It is certainly more subtle than pointing to an X on the blackboard, as Cohen (1975) suggests.

Grammatical terms. Localizing an error by mentioning what function it plays in the sentence (e.g., "verb") can have limited use. This practice eliminates destroying the student's chain of thought in the middle of a long sentence. Obviously, it is only useful with students who understand the vocabulary and who are fairly proficient. It should be noted that this technique does not focus on communication but rather on form or linguistic correctness.

S: I came to the U.S. on plane in 1978.
T: Preposition?
S: By plane. I came by plane.

S: Quiero que me da un ejemplo.
T: ¿Subjuntivo?
S: Quiero que me *de* un ejemplo.

Gestures. Under certain circumstances, errors can be corrected nonverbally. The students must be looking at the teacher, so exercises read from a book or conversations between students would not apply. The great advantage of using gestures is that there is no additional verbal input to confuse the student. Furthermore, gestures often take less time than verbal corrections. Error correction and explanation often cause the student to forget the original question or part of the answer. The process must then start over, and time is wasted. Proponents of the audiolingual method encouraged teachers to develop an elaborate system for indicating which students were to respond (whole class, one row, an individual) or the type of response desired (repeat, listen). Teachers may find several of these gestures useful.

- Yes-no. Nodding or shaking the head will get a student to continue or stop an utterance.

- Continue. Rolling the hand in a forward circle at the wrist will encourage a student who hesitates for fear of having made a mistake or let a student know that the sentence is not complete.

- Stop. Holding the palms toward a student will stop an unwanted interruption or an unnecessary lapse into the native language.

- Syntax. Flipping one hand over the other will let a student know that the word order is wrong.

  T: Do you want these books?
  S: Yes, give them me.
  T: [gestures]
  S: Give me them.

  T: ¿Qué es esto?
  S: Es una roja pluma
  T: [gestures]
  S: Una pluma roja.

- Number. Singular can be indicated with one finger; plural with several. A wiggling motion will emphasize the latter. These gestures can be used with any part of speech that shows number and can be combined with pinpointing, if necessary.

T: Haben Sie Schwestern?
S: Ja, ich habe eine Schwestern.
T: eine . . . [gesture]
S: eine Schwester.

- Stress. Gattegno (1976) developed a nonverbal way to indicate which syllable of a word carries the stress. On the extended index finger of one hand, the teacher taps out the rhythm of the word with the other index finger, using a more forceful tap on the stressed syllable. This can be very useful because the languages commonly taught in North America all differ widely in their approach to accentuation.

- Elision. In languages where forms are elided, a gesture can indicate this type of error. The teacher puts the two palms parallel to each other and then moves them closer together in a pushing motion. Other simple gestures can indicate liaison and intonation.

- Missing word. Gattegno recommends a gesture to show that the student has left a word out. The teacher holds up all fingers and points to each one as the student repeats the sentence. When the student arrives at the missing word, the teacher exaggerates the gesture to indicate that word.

  S: Je ne suis allé au laboratoire.
  T & S: Je . . . ne . . . suis [gesture] . . .
  pas allé . . .

- Tense. A gesture of the hand can indicate that a sentence should be in the past (thrown over the shoulder) or the future (moved forward). To be more clear, the teacher could accompany the motion with the name of the tense until the students learn the meaning.

- Grammatical terms plus gestures. Schachter (1981) combines grammatical terminology with gestures. The teacher can form six letters of the alphabet designated to represent time, agreement, plural, preposition, word order, and article errors. Schachter maintains that teachers can train students to understand these nonverbal corrections even if the students are not sophisticated enough to understand the terminology. She provides

examples of frequent errors in the ESL classroom; similar combinations could be developed for errors in other languages.

- Other gestures. Almost any repetitive type of mistake can be controlled with a gesture once the students adapt to its use. When Moskowitz (1976) compared outstanding teachers with average teachers, she found the former to be much more active nonverbally, and to use gestures that were instructional rather than personal.

Peer Correction

There are no specific techniques for getting students to correct one another's errors in class. The teacher can use any of the techniques for self-correction suggested above simply by calling on another student who understood what he or she was trying to indicate to the first student. The technique of generating simple sentences, mentioned above, can be particularly effective. Instead of the teacher's providing possible answers, several students can do the same thing. The teacher can then return to the student who made the original error, and it will seem as if no correction had been made.

As mentioned earlier, the problem in peer correction is to avoid unfavorable comparisons between students. One can achieve this by seeking examples from other students rather than by asking for explanations. The teacher should not ask, "What was that mistake?" but should simply ask the same question of someone else. The teacher should give all students a chance to provide corrections. Since the first person to answer a question is at a disadvantage over those who hear a partial answer or have longer to think, it is possible for weak students to correct more proficient ones. It is up to the teacher to maintain a spirit of cooperation among classmates and a positive attitude toward the making and correcting of errors.

Teacher Correction

Providing correct answer. Although this has been widely criticized as not demonstrating that real learning is taking place (e.g., Fanselow 1977), there comes a time when the teacher must tell the class what the proper form is. Often it

is a question of saving time or reducing confusion, especially when two errors must be corrected. The teacher should return to the student who made the error, ask for a repetition or reformulation, and look for a glimmer of understanding.

OLD. Burt and Kiparsky (1972) propose "Own Language Distortion." The teacher translates into the native language an improper syntactic element a student has made to demonstrate how shocking it sounds. In other words,

Fr: *Ne donnez-le-moi pas
Sp: *No de me lo

sound as bad as

Eng: *Don't it to me give.

In practice, the student may not remember whether it was the affirmative or negative imperative that sounded bad. Some may feel that this is an unnecessary lapse back into the native language.

Discrimination exercises. Fanselow (1977) recommends contrasting the correct and incorrect forms, even to the extent of writing lists on the board and asking students for explanations of each item.

S: I take a course in history.
T: I take? I am taking? [discussion]

Paraphrasing. Hanzeli (1975) recommends paraphrasing a syntactic error, while Joiner (1975) suggests modeling the incorrect sentence with the proper substitution but without calling attention to the correction. The problem here is that many students may not hear the difference between the two. A fairly important error, such as articles in French, word stress in English and Spanish, and case in German, may be understood only as a variation in pronunciation. The teacher should use this technique when a more direct correction would have a negative effect.

* * *

The above list includes many more techniques than any one teacher could use. The proper selection will depend on many factors. Student sensitivity to correction, atmosphere, pace and level of the course, and goals are just a few of the criteria that one must take into account before the ultimate selection process--trial and error.

It must be noted that all these techniques apply to teacher-directed activities. It would be unreasonable, for example, to expect this type of correction in small-group work. Lantolf (1977) suggests using the latter to encourage speech rather than grammatical accuracy.

An additional problem with oral work is deciding what to do with sentences that are entirely correct. Many teachers repeat the utterance verbatim for a variety of reasons: others in the class can hear it better; they will hear a better pronunciation; and it will reinforce the correct response. The author has observed many beginning teachers who often repeat answers simply as a nervous habit. Students should be encouraged to speak louder so that everyone can hear. Otherwise, the teacher's repetitions may be taken to be corrections. In any exchange of language, students should understand that they have communicated successfully.

4. TECHNIQUES OF ERROR CORRECTION: WRITTEN WORK

General Considerations

Wingfield (1975) states that there are five ways for the teacher to approach the correction of written compositions: (1) providing clues for self-correction; (2) correcting the text; (3) making marginal notes; (4) explaining errors orally to students; and (5) using errors as an illustration for class discussion. He prefers self-correction by the students.

Correcting compositions is not unlike correcting oral errors. Correction by the student who made the error or by others in the class can precede teacher correction. Once again, one has to wonder if simply providing the correct response will benefit the student in the long run. Students may have problems remembering such superficial input, or may not even bother to read written corrections (Phillips 1968).

As in the case of oral expression, many scholars recommend correcting only major errors in written work. Robinett (1972) suggests correcting paragraphs for specific errors such as spelling, punctuation, or articles. Hendrickson (1980) feels that students lose confidence when they see too many corrections. Grittner believes that teachers should give more emphasis to what is correct than to what is wrong (1977). Walker (1973) reports that his survey found university students to be discouraged by excessive correcting. They spend so much time on details that they are afraid of losing their overall ability. On the other hand, Lalande (1981) opposes this selectivity on several grounds: (1) unlike oral work, the correction of written errors is done in private; (2) students need a considerable amount of feedback about their ability; (3) communication is not the only purpose for writing; it may be possible that an author wishes to gain respect. He concludes that important differences between oral and written language make the error correction analogy between them false.

The limited number of students that Lalande surveyed did not object to having all errors corrected.

Each teacher will have to decide which types of errors to correct. Hendrickson (1976) did a comparative study in which one group had only communicative errors in their compositions corrected and the other had them all corrected. Neither system proved superior by the end of the course. The following techniques may be used no matter which philosophy a teacher follows.

Techniques

Self-correction

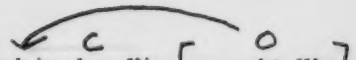
Symbols and abbreviations. The most frequently suggested method to motivate students to correct their own mistakes is to use a symbol or abbreviation for a grammatical term (e.g., T = tense, sp = spelling). The symbol can be written in the margin and then the specific error may or may not be pointed out by underlining (Brown 1979, Higgs 1979, Omaggio 1981, Rivers 1975, Stack 1978). Thus, the student must determine the correct form, as with the pinpointing technique in oral work. All the self-correction techniques require that the student rewrite the composition and turn it in with the original draft.

Hendrickson (1980) suggests a standardized set of symbols for indirect corrections: underlining of incorrect spelling, a circle around inappropriate words, an arrow for a missing element, and a question mark for a confusing phrase (see this article for numerous examples in four languages). The teacher should hand out a list of symbols and abbreviations at the beginning of the course. Brown provides a list for German, Higgs for Spanish, and Omaggio and Stack (1978a) for French. Nash (1968) provides the necessary vocabulary in English, Russian, German, and French for creating such a list.

F Sp The boy go to the store with his siter.

aux g Il a allé au piscine hier.

X, T
Soy en los Estados Unidos el año pasado.



Wir sind in dem Kino um acht Uhr gegangen.

In the above examples, F = form, Sp = spelling, aux = auxiliary, g = gender, x = wrong word, T = tense, C = case, O = order. The examples show increasing precision in locating the specific error and, therefore, decreasing reliance on the student.

Reference to grammar rules. Rivers (1975) and Stack (1978) mention briefly the possibility of indicating a specific rule of grammar in the textbook when a student breaks that rule in written work. (I have used this technique successfully on the elementary level. In two to four hours one can prepare a detailed outline of a grammar book from which to indicate to the student the pages and the numbers of important rules.) Sending a student to pages 96-98 for an incorrect object pronoun will not help. Instead, the teacher, using the outline as a guide, can write *94:3(c)* above a sentence like

S: Il donne lui du thé.

By consulting rule 3(c) on page 94, the student is reminded that object pronouns precede the verb in French. This technique can be particularly useful in a sequenced course in which the class finishes a grammar book and then moves on to a reader or other activity. One should not attempt to send a student ahead in a book to a rule that has not been studied in class. As with the technique of using symbols and abbreviations, success depends upon students' rewriting the paper and turning both copies in.

Checklists. Several writers have prepared checklists that students can use as reminders when they write compositions. Cohen (1975) suggests that students go over their written work several times with a particular structure in mind each time. This can be individualized if a teacher knows a particular student has trouble with adjective agreement, for example. Four other scholars have developed checklists for students; the lists all differ somewhat in purpose and use.

Robinett (1972) developed a long list of frequent errors made by ESL students (see Appendix A). The teacher writes a code number above an error in the composition and the same number on the checklist next to the appropriate explanation. The author feels that this method not only requires a greater

concentration on the part of the student, but it also provides the teacher with a more objective way of evaluating student progress.

Donley (1978) provides a list of 26 ideas to help essay writers (see Appendix B). Using this list, the teacher can indicate the good and bad points on each essay by means of a letter. This procedure greatly reduces the number of comments the teacher needs to make, and it focuses on style rather than on grammatical accuracy.

Knapp's checklist (1972) serves as a sort of syllabus for the students (Appendix C). The students demonstrate in their written work that they have mastered each section. It is an attempt to break writing into manageable units like grammar or pronunciation. The checklist provided by Friend (1971; Appendix D) is similar in that the student fills it out and gives it to the teacher rather than the other way around as suggested by Robinett and Donley.

Peer Correction

Projection. A student composition can be projected on a screen for the entire class to correct. Hagel (1978) reports success on the secondary level with the use of an opaque projector. Students competed to see who could produce the first essay without errors. (I use an overhead projector in my advanced language classes in much the same way.) Two students are selected the day before the composition is due and are asked to write their essays on transparencies. In most instances the student-author can remain anonymous. Witbeck (1976) points out some disadvantages to this method, however: the author of the essay is often distracted, a few students usually dominate the discussion, and there is rarely any student-to-student communication.

Group compositions. Valette (1973) describes a technique that is useful to teachers who have a large number of students and cannot grade written work frequently. Groups of five students get together to write an essay. The teacher has less work because there are fewer papers and fewer errors to correct. In addition, the students get oral practice by discussing the assignment in the target language. The group writes the finished product on a ditto master and reproduces it for the entire class.

Exchanging compositions. Witbeck (1976) proposes several variations of swapping written work to provide corrections. A composition can be given to a pair of students to be rewritten, but this is too difficult for many. The teacher can help by choosing specific types of errors to look for. The teacher can retype the composition, eliminating minor errors, and the students can then evaluate and improve the form of the composition. The latter method permits the class to deal with longer essays.

In-class editing. Gaudiani (1981) advocates an in-class editing approach involving self- and peer correction. Students rewrite their early compositions at home and then correct and rewrite them in class under the guidance of their classmates and the teacher. The class reads and discusses student essays, not only correcting any grammatical errors but noting elements of style and organizational strategy, using either English, the target language, or a mélange of the two. Gaudiani includes several examples of students' compositions that illustrate the effectiveness of her method.

Teacher Correction

Direct correction. Hendrickson (1980) suggests that if the student cannot understand indirect corrections, then specific methods can be used. A general technique is to underline a word in order to call attention to a hint written near it. A misplaced word can be bracketed and placed in its proper order with an arrow. Superfluous words are simply crossed out. Semantic errors must often be corrected in the most direct manner possible: by providing the exact word. A direct correction, as defined by Hendrickson, is when the teacher tells the student where the error is and what the correct form is. The teacher uses symbols whenever possible to save time in rewriting the sentence.

Recording. Phillips (1968) advocates recording corrections on cassette tapes. This avoids the problem of students' ignoring written corrections and allows the teacher to provide explanations of grammar that may be too long to write out. Phillips suggests two methods for using the tape recorder: the teacher can write the simpler corrections on the paper and use numbers keyed to the tape for longer explanations, or the essay can be read along with a commentary. The grade is not given until the end, so the student must listen to the entire tape.

Farnsworth (1974) recommends requiring a rewrite to be sure the student profits from the corrections. She mentions as an additional advantage of this technique the possibility of providing the students with examples of a preferred style or phrasing that would be too long to write out. Phillips and Farnsworth agree that this method increases student-teacher rapport because it is more personal than writing.

Charting errors. To insure that students profit from teacher corrections, two researchers have devised methods of charting learner errors. Chastain (1980b) recommends that the teacher read an essay twice and grade it for message (fluency) and then for grammar. The overall grade would be the average of the two. The teacher then selects three errors for each student that must be eliminated from future work. A grade sheet to be returned by the student with future essays explains the errors and reminds the teacher which three errors the student is supposed to have overcome.

Higgs (1979) recommends the opposite procedure. The teacher draws up a list of types of errors (e.g., subject-verb agreement) and assigns a point value to each. A tally sheet can then be constructed with types of errors listed vertically and students' names horizontally. The teacher can use a symbol to mark an error on a composition, and the student must consult the list to find out what it is. This procedure makes assigning a grade much more objective, and the point values can be changed as the course progresses. Higgs also suggests adding points for good use of a grammatical feature. Shaughnessy (1977) and Omaggio (1981) give numerous examples of how teachers can analyze written errors to determine their probable cause.

As far as grading criteria are concerned, students themselves can have input. Valette (1973) proposes that once group compositions have been evaluated by the class, students can then rank them by preference, indicating their reasons (originality, accuracy of grammar); these criteria become the teacher's values in assigning a grade. This is just one more type of activity which, like those described above, makes the writing of a foreign language a more active learning experience.

5. CONCLUSION

Research has not proven the superiority of any one error correction technique over another. Certainly, students expect teachers to correct them, and they seem to prefer it. Selectivity in the correction of oral errors is necessary for maintaining the pace of the class and for avoiding the possibility of embarrassing students with excessive interruptions. These problems do not exist with the grading of compositions; the teacher has more time, and the student reads the comments in private. Therefore, teachers can set higher goals for linguistic accuracy of written language.

Selectivity of error correction implies a choice of the order in which to correct errors. Most researchers rank as most important those errors that impede communication, those that students make frequently, and those that occur in features that the class has recently studied.

I have taken the position in this monograph that students should be the first to correct their own oral errors. The benefits of this approach include the students' satisfaction in coming up with the correct answer, proving that they recognize the error, and the reduction in the amount of time the teacher spends talking. If the person who made the error cannot correct it, the teacher should ask another student. The correction will often take the form of an alternative answer that is a valid reply to the original question. The teacher will occasionally need to correct errors directly in order to save time and avoid confusion. Such correction should be done in a positive manner so that students may learn to speak rather than fear the language.

Written errors should follow the same order of correction. Students may be given general guidelines or specific points to reconsider before writing their compositions again. Groups of students can write or correct essays together in a spirit of cooperation. Teachers, of course, will also need to supply precise corrections or alternative forms to improve students' expression in the target language.

The techniques presented here are far too numerous to be used in one class or by one teacher. All the suggestions treat errors as a natural result of the language-learning process. Individual teachers can select the types of errors they wish to concentrate on and the correction techniques they prefer in order to best facilitate this learning.

APPENDIX A

Frequent Errors Made by ESL Students[1]

AGREEMENT
____subject and verb do not agree
____pronoun and referent do not agree

ARTICLES AND DETERMINERS

Omission	Incorrect Use
____a	____
____an	____
____the	____
____other	____

CAPITALIZATION
____omission
____incorrect

COMPARISONS
____use *like*
____use *the same as*
____use *different from*
____use *-er*
____use *more -- than --*
____use *the -- est*
____use *the most --*

CONTENT
____incorrect information
____awkward: needs rewording
____cannot understand your meaning

DOUBLE NEGATIVE
____avoid double negatives

FORMAT
____improper heading
____improper size paper
____not written in ink
____no title
____improper left margin
____improper right margin
____indent for each paragraph

NOUNS
____should be singular
____should be plural
____improper form
____mass noun (should be singular)

PARAGRAPHING
____begin new paragraph
____no new paragraph

PENMANSHIP (Handwriting)
____handwriting interferes with communication
____avoid non-English symbols

PREPOSITIONS

Omission	Incorrect Use
____in	____
____on	____
____at	____
____to	____
____of	____
____other	____

PUNCTUATION

Omission	Incorrect Use
____period .	____
____question mark ?	____
____exclamation point !	____
____comma ,	____
____colon :	____
____semicolon ;	____
____apostrophe '	____
____hyphen -	____
____quotation marks " "	____
____underlining ____	____
____others (dash, parenthesis, etc.)	____

SENTENCE
____incomplete sentence
____two sentences run together

SPELLING
____incorrectly spelled

VERBS
____tense incorrect
____form incorrect
____do not use *to* after a modal
____do not use *-ing* after *to*
____use *to* + *verb* form
____use plain form
____use *-ing* form
____incorrect sequence of tenses

VOCABULARY
____form incorrect
____item incorrect
____word(s) omitted
____unnecessary word(s)

WORD DIVISION
____divide words at syllable boundaries
____write as one word
____write as two words

WORD ORDER
____observe SVO Place Time word order
____incorrect question word order
____incorrect included-question word order
____change word order as indicated

APPENDIX B

Points to Aid Essay-writers[2]

The wise essay writer:

- reads (or chooses) the title carefully;
- writes an opening paragraph that does not ramble but is business-like and to the point;
- clearly informs the reader of what he will attempt to do (before he does it);
- makes sure that his introductory section exhibits a funnel-like pattern, narrowing down and focusing on some particular aspect or approach (the general background thus sketched in perhaps constituting the 'known' which should always precede the 'unknown');
- plans well, arranging his points in a logical order;
- says explicitly at each stage of the argument what he is about;
- keeps to the point throughout;
- establishes at every stage (the sentence-level included) some expectancy of what is to follow;
- writes unified paragraphs, using this device to help carry the reader along;
- makes good use of transition, in the form both of transitional phrases within paragraphs and of transitional paragraphs themselves;

- is not over-repetitive in the use of given ideas, phrases, or words;
- achieves a similar variety in his sentence structure (alternating complex with simple) and his paragraph structure (alternating loose with periodic);
- cultivates clarity of style, avoiding ambiguous expressions and references;
- is careful in his choice and use of words, avoiding or defining those whose meaning is not clear, eschewing those with archaic, informal, or colloquial connotations,
- adopts a personal point of view, yet is not too personal or informal in tone;
- gives exact, correct references; quotes correctly or indicates that the passage is paraphrased;
- uses footnotes and includes a complete formally accurate bibliography (if required);
- when giving a quotation or paraphrase, makes sure that its meaning is not distorted by its being taken out of context;
- does not generalize unless he can, and does, support the generalization with evidence;
- keeps the evidence subordinate to a consideration of its meaning;
- writes interestingly, this being possible only if he has chosen a topic which interests him;
- writes correctly;
- spells well and avoids abbreviations in the body of the text;
- punctuates well and makes correct use of capitalization;
- knowing that *finis coronat opus*, concludes well, and gives the reader the feeling of having progressed in a certain direction--the tone indicated at the outset;
- revises his work and makes sure it is neatly presented, rewriting or retyping if necessary.

APPENDIX C

Composition Check-List[3]

Rough Outline

- A clear thesis statement that can be supported or proved
- Three or more useful supporting points

Rough Draft

- Shows examples of thoughtful editing

Final Draft

Mechanics give a clean, orderly impression

- The title--is correctly capitalized
  shows imagination in phrasing
  indicates the subject clearly
- Adequate margins--sides, top, bottom
- Clear indentation for paragraphs
- Clear, easy-to-read handwriting or typing

Logical development of one idea in a paragraph

- A topic sentence that gives the idea of the paragraph
- A clear controlling idea in the topic sentence

- Supporting statements that focus on the controlling idea
- Clear relationship or transition between sentences

Imaginative, precise use of language

- Connectives used with precision to show relationship
- Careful, correct use of expanded vocabulary
- Examples of artful phrasing
- Correct spelling and hyphenating
- Correct punctuation to develop the meaning of sentences
- Good use of parallel structure in series
- Good use of phrases or clauses to modify or to tighten the expression of an idea
- Good selection of detail to suggest larger meaning
- A good conclusion that draws the paragraph together

Good idea content

- A clearly expressed idea, worthy of adult communication
- Challenging, original thinking

Corrections--with adequate practice to insure mastery

APPENDIX D

Composition Check-List[4]

CONTENT

- Is your topic interesting to a mature reader?
- Did you restrict your subject?
- Did you state your purpose clearly?
- Is every idea in the paper relevant to the thesis?

STRUCTURE

- Did you arrange and develop your paragraph(s) in a logical manner according to main ideas? (Introduction, body, conclusion?)
- Did you arrange your sentences logically? (Does each sentence clarify the major idea in the paragraph? In other words, is each sentence necessary?)
- Did you use transitions effectively? Between sentences? Between paragraphs?

MECHANICS

- Did you write grammatically correct sentences? (Does each sentence express a complete thought?)
- Did you use other grammatical patterns correctly? (Modals, idioms, verb tenses, number shifts, etc.)
- Did you vary your sentence patterns?

- Did you punctuate correctly?
- Did you spell words correctly? (Use your dictionary often.)

NOTES

1. Copyright © 1972, TESOL in Betty Wallace Robinett, On the horns of a dilemma: Correcting compositions. In *Studies in honor of Albert H. Marckwardt*, James E. Alatis, ed. Washington, D.C.: TESOL, p. 145. Quoted by permission of the author and publisher.

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